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Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy Extends Deadline for Accepting Second Round of Proposed Pilot Funding Projects for Economic Development

Big Stone Gap, Va. - The Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME) is accepting economic development project proposals. The agency received a second \$10 million to develop Abandoned Mine Land (AML) sites. The grant comes from the Power Plus Pilot Program which was part of the Omnibus Funding Bill. Projects completed with the funds will not only be designed to boost the economy of southwest Virginia's coalfields but will also improve the environment.

Proposals must meet the Office of Surface Mining and Reclamation Enforcement (OSMRE) Guidance for Power Plus Pilot Program projects and submitted to DMME. The necessary forms and guidance documents will be announced and made available on DMME's website once final information is made available by OSMRE. It is anticipated that proposals will be accepted through the end of October.

An advisory group will review all proposals. Those that exhibit clear economic development and deemed to meet required criteria will be submitted to the OSMRE for review and approval.

DMME received the initial \$10 million in 2017 and worked with an advisory council to select six economic development projects to send to OSMRE for approval. Projects vetted and approved by OSMRE will begin construction this year.

An AML inventory is currently available via the DMME [website](http://www.dmme.virginia.gov) and lists features for each site.

The Abandoned Mine Land program was created after more thorough environmental laws were passed through the Surface Mining and Control Act in 1977. The program is charged with reclaiming sites that were mined before those laws were in place and that could be a hazard to the public and the environment.

DMME prioritizes those projects based on the severity and whether another entity is available to reclaim the site. The \$10 million will allow the agency to reclaim projects that may not have taken precedence before. The reclamation of these projects will have a focus of improving the economy of southwest Virginia with the added benefit of improving the environment.

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